

Letter from E.W. Blatchford to Alexander Graham Bell, January 27, 1910

1111 North La Salle Avenue, Chicago, Ill. January 27th, 1910. Hon. Alexander Graham Bell, Washington, D. C. My dear Professor Bell:—

When you and Mrs. Bell were visiting Mrs. Hjortsberg thirteen years ago, I gratefully remember your interest in our grandson, John, eldest son of our son, Paul, He was recovering from a very severe attack of scarlet fever and was about to undergo the double mastoid operation.

After the close of the the gathering of a few of our prominent oculists and aurists, who we had invited to meet you at our home, you kindly, on your suggestion, had an interview in my library, with our friend — Dr. George F. Fiske, who was to perform the operation on the following day. The operation left John totally deaf in one ear, with the hearing in the other somewhat impaired.

His hearing, while not perfect, did not interfere with his pursuing his preparatory studies, and entering Amherst College, in the fall of 1906, nine years after the operation. He successfully pursued his studies through the Freshman year.

In the vacation of 1907, total deafness suddenly came upon him, and has continued from that time 2 till now. Dr. Clarence Blake, of Boston, under whose care he had been, while in the East, assured us that the nerve was not dead, and recommended detailed care for his inflamed ear, and “lip reading” for his occupation. His ear is pronounced in good condition, and he continues the study of lip reading under Miss Mary Mc Cowen, head of the school for the deaf at Englewood. He takes these half hour lessons twice a week, with irregular practice at home.

Library of Congress

During this time John has pursued his studies at the Lewis Institute, in this city, in Mathematics, and engineering, in which he has decided interest. And the school reports are satisfactory, his personal connections with his teachers being near and sympathetic.

He is a fine young fellow, of twenty-two, in good health, genial and attractive in manner. His cheerfulness through these experiences, has been unvaried.

We are emboldened to take your time in this statement of our dear grandson's case, in the hope that your wide experience, thorough knowledge, and large heart may bring us some new suggestion.

May I express the severe shock we all received at the sudden taking away of our honored friend, (and connection by marriage,) Mrs. Gardiner G. Hubbard. My acquaintance with her began before her marriage, when I was a law clerk in the office of my uncle E.H. Blatchford, New York. 3 and my home was in his family, residing in Clinton Place, opposite to, and very intimate with the Mc Curdy's, my aunt Mary Ann a Blatchford being a sister of Mr. Hubbard. What memories of a noble character, and wise, beneficent life has she left behind. May I beg that you express my appreciation of such a life to her daughter, Mrs. Bell.

I would apologize for the length of this letter, only warranted by a solicitude for a precious grandson.

Believe me, dear Professor Bell,

With cordial regard, in which my wife unites,

Faithfully yours, E. W. Blatchford